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THE LOS ANGELES CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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THE LOS ANGELES CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The functions of the Health Department
with statistics for 1938-1939.

George Parrish, M. D.,
Health Officer.

Board of Health Commissioners.

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THE LOS ANGELES CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The functions of the Health Department
with statistics for 1924-1925.

George F. Smith, M. D.,
Public Officer.

Board of Health Commissioners.

THE LOS ANGELES CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

George Parrish, M. D.,
Health Officer

The foundation of the well-being of an individual, of a community, and of a nation is Health, and a modern health program having definite objectives, must--of necessity--have a personnel to carry on. The Los Angeles City Health Department is the medium through which the health of our city is safeguarded. It supervises the sanitary conditions of all public schools, jails, hospitals, and other public buildings, and all public or private health establishments or institutions of any kind under such ordinances as may be adopted by the City Council and under the laws of the State and Nation applicable within the city.

THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES is composed of the following divisions or bureaus: Accounting, Administrative, Child Hygiene, Epidemiology and Morbidity, Fruit and Vegetable Inspection, Industrial Hygiene, Housing and Sanitation, Laboratories, Meat and Milk Inspection, Nursing, Rabies Control, Rodent Control, and Tuberculosis Clinics, Venereal Disease Clinics, and Vital Statistics. On December 20, 1933, the City Maternity Service was taken over by the County Charities Department of Los Angeles. However, the City Health Department still furnishes quarters for the Maternity Clinic and offices, and provides both pre-natal and post-partum nursing care for the mothers.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION: The administration of the Health Department is entrusted to the Board of Health Commissioners and the Health Officer. The Board of Health Commissioners has the power to enact regulations not in conflict with the State laws and city ordinances. It supervises, regulates and manages the department through the Health Officer, who is appointed by the Commission.

The Health Officer is the General Manager of the Health Department. The Charter provides that he shall be a graduate of a reputable

college of medicine and shall have had at least three years' experience in the administration of public health work. He is appointed by the Board of Health Commissioners under Civil Service regulations. Subject to the instructions of his Board of Health Commissioners, his powers and duties are:

- (1) To administer the affairs of the department as its chief administrative officer;
- (2) To appoint, discharge, suspend, or transfer the employees of the department, other than the secretary to the Board and the chief accounting employee of the department, and to issue instructions to said employees, other than the secretary and the chief accounting employee, in the line of their duties, all subject to the Civil Service provisions of the Charter;
- (3) To expend the funds of the department in accordance with the provisions of the budget appropriations or of appropriations made subsequent to the budget;
- (4) To recommend to the Board of the department prior to the beginning of each fiscal year an annual departmental budget covering the anticipated revenues and expenditures of the department, conforming so far as practicable to the forms and dates provided in the Charter in relation to the general city budget;
- (5) To certify all expenditures of the department to the chief accounting employee;
- (6) To exercise such further powers in the administration of the department as may be conferred upon him by the Board of his department.
(Charter, City of Los Angeles).

The position of Health Officer is one of responsibility; therefore, he must be a trained sanitarian and physician. The Health Officer is charged with the duty of enforcing the health laws that apply to his district; he has no power over conditions that do not affect health. His authority is derived from State Laws, local ordinances, the Charter, and police powers. His every act must be guided by law, and he is answerable to the courts. If he does his work well he must be more than a passive agent, he must be a leader; he must seek missed cases of contagion, be constantly on the lookout for nuisances, and urge the physicians and the public to undertake new lines of work. He is expected to save the lives of babies, to

prolong the lives of adults and to promote the health and comfort of everybody in his community. He must arouse those who through ignorance or self-satisfaction do not wish to be disturbed. This type of work can be accomplished only by a continuous, well-balanced activity founded on knowledge and backed by conviction.

The personnel of the Administrative Division directly under the Health Officer consists of a chief deputy health officer, who is in charge of all medical activities; an executive assistant, who is in charge of all lay activities; secretary to the Health Officer, and three stenographers.

THE ACCOUNTING DIVISION of the Los Angeles City Health Department records all expenditures, issues all demands, does all departmental ordering and purchasing, makes up the payroll, and keeps all employment records. The records of this division show that the Los Angeles City Health Department gross cost to the taxpayers for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1939, was only 46.36¢ per capita, a remarkably low rate. In fact, the majority of large cities in the United States operate at a cost of about \$1.04 per capita; even the Los Angeles County Health Department spends more than double the amount spent by the Los Angeles City Health Department. The total Departmental Budget for the City Health Department for the year 1939-1940 is \$733,701. Inspection fees returned to the City Treasury amounted to approximately \$208,000, leaving a net cost to the general taxpayers of \$525,701, or 35¢ per capita, based on a population of 1,500,000.

CHILD HYGIENE DIVISION: Child hygiene conferences constitute the major part of the work in the Child Hygiene Division. The program is educational; general hygienic care and infant feeding are stressed.

The objective of the Division of Child Hygiene is better babies through proper health supervision. To accomplish this the Division of Child Hygiene conducts twenty-two well-baby conferences throughout the City of Los Angeles. Trained pediatricians, assisted by public health nurses, instruct mothers in matters of hygiene, feeding, and general care. Minor disturbances are treated at these conferences, while acutely ill children are referred elsewhere for treatment. Immunization against diphtheria is a major activity of the Child Hygiene Division, both at our conferences and also in city and parochial schools. Vaccination for smallpox is offered at all conferences. Vaccination against whooping cough is done on a limited scale. Complete physical examinations are offered to children attending parochial schools. The children in the public schools have this service through the School Health Department, under the Board of Education.

Each year the volume of work of the Division of Child Hygiene increases. This year's attendance of 57,383 was an increase over the previous year's attendance of 54,973.

The personnel of the Child Hygiene Division consists of one physician-director, seven part-time clinicians, and one stenographer.

THE DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND MORBIDITY is concerned with the prevention, diagnosis and control of communicable diseases. Details of the number of houses quarantined and nature of the disease are obtainable from the yearly report published by the City Health Department. Perusal of these morbidity and mortality statistics will show this to have been a healthy year, with no devastating epidemic of any kind to combat. Poliomyelitis so rampant in the summer of 1934 and to a lesser degree in the summers of 1935, 1936 and 1937, has almost entirely disappeared.

The District Doctors are under the supervision of this division. There are eight district doctors and a chief epidemiologist. Besides communicable disease control, these district doctors also call on the indigent sick. Branch offices are maintained in Van Nuys, Watts, Venice, West Los Angeles, Tujunga, and the San Pedro-Wilmington District, in addition to the main office of the Health Department. During the last year, these doctors made 19,232 health calls, vaccinated 21,291 persons; dressing the wound as many times thereafter as was necessary, besides attending to many other duties.

The investigation of food poisoning cases is also under the jurisdiction of this Division. A weekly bulletin of communicable diseases is furnished to all hospitals and other interested organizations.

The control of RABIES is a duty of this Division. During the past year 9,521 persons were bitten by dogs; 286 were bitten by rabid dogs. A total of 294 animals died of rabies. There were two human deaths from rabies.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE DIVISION: The name of this division of the Health Department tells us very clearly its duty.

Los Angeles consumes more fruits and vegetables per capita than any of the large cities in this country. This is due to proximity to the source of supply, resulting in fresh produce at low prices and to the mild climate. The attractive displays in open air markets stimulate buying.

Tremendous quantities of produce arrive daily in our markets by railroad car, truck and boat. Yearly receipts expressed in carlot equivalents and covering 115 commodities amounted to well over 79,000 car loads. California, incidentally, supplied 87% of this total.

When these millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables are unloaded from truck, car or boat into the markets of Los Angeles they become the responsibility of our fruit and vegetable inspection staff. This is the smallest inspection unit in the Health Department. Consider then, the magnitude of the task confronting it; routine check-

ing of the retail markets throughout the city and investigation of complaints by consumers on one hand, and examination of the vast stores of perishable produce in the great wholesale markets on the other.

The produce business is highly competitive, with practically no government intervention in price setting. Volume sales at low prices are the rule, requiring continuous scrutiny of the more perishable commodities by the inspector. The taxpayer of Los Angeles City is getting a definite bargain in his Fruit and Vegetable Division, since the fees collected from the industry very nearly defray division maintenance costs. The personnel of this division consists of one chief inspector and seven inspectors.

It is proposed in the near future to consolidate this division with the Bureau of Housing and Sanitation and General Food Inspection. This will enable a closer supervision of the retail vegetable markets.

HOUSING AND SANITATION AND GENERAL FOOD INSPECTION. Each year the activities of this division become more and more extensive and the duties more exacting, due chiefly to increased population and to new territory annexed from time to time.

The city proper is divided into thirty districts, which in turn are divided into ten sub-districts, resulting in each inspector covering his entire district twice a month. There were 209,255 inspections or reinspections made during the year and a total of 139,554 nuisances abated or improvements obtained. The inspectors must be familiar with the laws governing such subjects as housing, ventilation, sanitation, plumbing, the preparation and handling of food, factories, dwellings, manufacturing establishments, barber shops, beauty parlors, mosquito control, beverage plants, the care of bathing beaches, swimming pools and other matters.

The personnel consists of one director, one mosquito exterminator, six supervisors, forty-five inspectors, five clerks and one cashier.

INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE. This new division of the City Health Department was organized in 1939. The personnel consists of one physician-director, 1 sanitary engineer, and one industrial engineer.

During the last few years the scope of industrial hygiene has expanded considerably, from the control of accidents to the prevention of occupational diseases among industrial workers; and finally, to the promotion and conservation of health of all gainfully employed persons. The Industrial Hygiene Division aids industry to evaluate its problems, suggests ways and means for their control, develops standards of good practice, furnishes technical guidance and conducts educational programs.

DIVISION OF LABORATORIES: The Bacteriologic and Chemical laboratories of the Health Department, and the milk laboratories maintained by the city in outside counties, are under the supervision of one director of laboratories.

During the fiscal year 1938-1939, the laboratories examined a grand total of 260,894 samples. Bacteriologic milk tests, water tests, and examinations for food poisoning organisms are made; also examinations of diphtheria cultures, smears for gonococcus infection, Wassermann tests, blood and feces examinations for typhoid, etc. Pasteur treatments are given by a physician who is an expert bacteriologist; 247 persons received these treatments last year.

Examinations are made of rats and other rodents for evidences of plague, tularemia and rat paratyphoid. Flea surveys are made from time to time in order to establish the location and percentage of the dangerous types.

Chemical examinations of foods are made for chemical contamination, such as sulphites in hamburger, arsenic on fruits and vegetables and other mineral poison contaminants. Milk and ice cream are examined in the chemical laboratory for total solids and butterfats.

The personnel of the laboratories consist of one director, two assistant directors, nine laboratory technicians, three messengers and caretakers, and one clerk.

MEAT DIVISION. All work done in this division is under the supervision of a registered veterinarian and the standards are very high.

During the last fiscal year, a total of 131,779 inspections were made by the meat inspectors; these covered meat, poultry and fish markets, fish canneries, slaughter houses, cold storage places, peddlers' wagons and sausage factories. The volume of products inspected amounted to over 400,000,000 pounds.

The personnel of the Meat Division consists of one chief veterinarian, one chief meat inspector and twenty-one inspectors.

MILK DIVISION. Milk is shipped into Los Angeles from the counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, Ventura and Kern, and cream is received from the counties of Tulare, Fresno, Merced, Kings, Madeira, San Joaquin, Kern, Stanislaus, Imperial, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo. In addition to the milk testing in the main laboratory in Los Angeles City, small but complete laboratories for milk testing are maintained in Tulare and Santa Maria.

Over 100,000 cows on 1,300 dairies produce on an average of 350,000

gallons of milk daily. During the past year, an average of 117,499 gallons of milk were consumed daily in Los Angeles City. In addition, approximately 13,000 gallons of cream are shipped here daily from the northern counties. The inspection of milk means a careful study of the farms, barns, equipment, personnel and the cattle, as well as examination of the milk itself.

Milk is a protective food and plays a large part in preventing the development of deficiency diseases. The Los Angeles City Health Department knows that the very elements which make milk the universal and most used food, also make it the most dangerous unless properly handled. Therefore, nothing is left to guesswork or to the jurisdiction of others. The Los Angeles City Health Department protects the citizens of Los Angeles by inspecting all milk that comes into Los Angeles from whatever source. All milk sold in the city is produced from cows that have successfully passed the tuberculin test.

The personnel of the Milk Division consists of four laboratory technicians, one chief milk inspector, and twelve milk inspectors.

Three clerks serve the Meat, Milk and Fruit and Vegetable Divisions.

NURSING DIVISION. The question is often asked, "What do nurses in a health department do?" - it being difficult sometimes for the public to disassociate public health nurses from the hospital or from private duty in the home. In fact, it is difficult to segregate the nursing service of a health department, since the nurses' work is so closely allied with that of other divisions of the department.

The nurses of the Health Department serve many hours every week in the municipal tuberculosis and venereal disease clinics and in the child hygiene conferences. They assist the physicians in the tuberculosis clinics to which they have persuaded persons who have been exposed to tuberculosis to come. They assist the physicians in the child hygiene clinics and interpret the instructions given in infant feeding and child hygiene.

During the year, the Health Department nurses made home calls on 90,000 patients of all types. When they go into these homes, they not only give the necessary nursing care to the sick, executing the health plans advised by the physicians, but they assume the responsibility for the health of the entire family in each case, taking advantage of every opportunity to teach the laws of health and demonstrate to the relatives or friends of the patient the proper nursing technique. Oftentimes, there are serious problems other than sickness in the home situations; the nurses then must take advantage of other resources in the community for handling these difficulties.

The Nursing Division also inspects and issues permits for the maintenance of children's institutions, boarding schools, day nurseries,

hospitals and sanitariums, and provides health supervision in parochial schools.

This division consists of one director, one assistant director, eight supervisors, one student nurse instructor, one chief clinic nurse, seventy-four staff nurses and three clerks.

RODENT CONTROL DIVISION. This division was organized Sept. 13, 1926 (after the withdrawal of the United States Public Health Service) for the purpose of preventing a return of plague to this city.

While primarily a control, rather than an extermination division, many hundreds of rats are trapped each year and examined for plague. Also, frequent poison campaigns are carried on when the funds are available, at which time all wharves and public dumps are poisoned and poison is spread around the entire city limits to control invasions of ground squirrels from adjoining territory.

The personnel of this division consists of one director, two supervisors, eleven inspectors, and one truck driver.

DIVISION OF TUBERCULOSIS. The City Health Department maintains its Division of Tuberculosis as a distinct department unit. The director is a full-time physician who is an experienced tuberculosis specialist. He has two full-time assistant health officers, three part-time physicians and four part-time conference physicians on his staff. The other personnel consist of one senior stenographer, two junior stenographers and one junior clerk, who spend all of their time in the work of the division. The public health nursing division of the City Health Department furnishes all nursing services to the tuberculosis division both in the central and the health district clinics and in the case-finding and case follow-up field work.

As in any other contagious disease control, the work of this division consists of three principal activities: (1) Treatment of active cases, (2) Prevention of immediate contact of infection, (3) Study and elimination of the general causative factors.

960 clinics were held last year with an attendance of 19,895 adults and 8,463 children. 6,159 visits were made to the clinic for pneumothorax collapse therapy.

THE VENEREAL DISEASE DIVISION, was organized February 23, 1917, with one part-time physician, assisted by three or four volunteer physicians. Seven months later a woman physician was added to the staff together with another male clinician, a part-time clerk for each branch of this service (men and women) and a steward for the men's clinics. Now there are 5 full-time physicians, 16 part-time physicians, 4 full-time clerks, 5 social service investigators; and nurses as needed.

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 1939, there was an attendance

of over 190,000 at the clinics, and this in spite of the fact that only the infectious and contagious stages of the venereal diseases are treated in the venereal disease clinics. A large number of these cases are undoubtedly the result of the ever increasing influx of venereally diseased transients. Another reason for the increase in venereal cases is the closing, in 1932, of the venereal hospital for women. This left the city with no institution in which to restrain or quarantine those women who persist in promiscuously distributing their disease. Without the threat of restraint many will not obey the instructions of the clinic physician.

Men and women are treated at separate clinics, the men being cared for by men physicians and the women and children by women physicians and nurses.

The principal object of these clinics is two-fold: First, to cure the patients, and second, to disseminate information that will prevent, as far as possible, the spread of venereal diseases.

The educational campaign against venereal diseases, first nationally inaugurated by the United States Public Health Service and closely followed by the State and City Health Departments, has already shown gratifying results in three principal ways: First, the great increase in the number of citizens seeking information and examination; second, the increase of indigent or low-bracket patients afforded treatment; and third, the widened scope of our persistent search for sources of infection and contact.

THE BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS is entrusted with the keeping of records relating to births, deaths and stillbirths -- the beginning and the end of human existence -- also, the supervision of matters pertaining to the disposal of the dead, as well as the issuance of copies of both birth and death certificates.

Last year the city broke all records since 1890 in the general death rate for all ages, and also the infant mortality rate. This year the crude infant mortality rate broke all previous records, including last year's. These low rates did not merely happen. They are the result of intelligent and persistent application of scientific methods, such as our forefathers knew very little about. We have made an attempt to show by graphs and charts how Los Angeles has kept pace with the rest of the world in the terrific battle against disease and death that has been waged since the beginning of the present century, a battle that has won greater victories than at any previous time in all history.

DEATHS: In spite of the fact that more than one-fifth of all deaths were non-residents, the crude rate was only 11.88. After making due allowance for non-residents, the death rate was 9.43.

BIRTHS: There were 20,409 live births, the highest number ever recorded here and 372 more than last year.

INFANT MORTALITY: The crude infant death rate, 44.49 is the lowest recorded for Los Angeles City; the adjusted rate was 39.68.

The personnel of the main office of the Bureau of Vital Statistics consist of 1 deputy registrar and 7 clerks.

BRANCH OFFICES: Complete health departments are maintained in Venice, West Los Angeles, San Pedro, Watts, Van Nuys and Tujunga. Each of these stations in fact is a miniature of the Central Los Angeles City Health Department. The following personnel are maintained in the respective branch health departments:

At Venice and covering the West Los Angeles territory: supervisor in charge, 1 assistant health officer, two nurses, two sanitary inspectors, one meat inspector and one milk inspector, and one clerk. Clinicians are provided as needed.

At Watts: assistant health officer, three nurses, one sanitary inspector, one meat inspector and one quarantine inspector. Clinicians are provided as needed.

At Van Nuys: assistant health officer, four nurses, three sanitary inspectors, one meat inspector, and one milk inspector, and one clerk. Clinicians are provided as needed.

At San Pedro and covering the Wilmington District: supervisor in charge, assistant health officer, two clerks, six nurses, two meat and fish inspectors, three sanitary inspectors, one milk inspector, one quarantine inspector, two rodent inspectors, and one mosquito exterminator. Clinicians are provided as needed.

At Tujunga: assistant health officer, one clinician, one nurse and one sanitary inspector.

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This, in brief, is a resume of the functions and work done by the Los Angeles City Health Department.

(Figures in this report are for the
fiscal year ended June 30, 1939.)

June, 1940.

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